3 1761 06380237 5

Quatrains from Omar Khayyám

PK
6516
C877
1900
c.1
ROBARTS

B. S. A de Branconière

([illegible] books & writing.)

(To be given to Mrs. Gilmore.)

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/quatrainsfromoma00omaruoft

To my dear "White Eagle."
with Love, M—

QUATRAINS FROM OMAR KHAYYÁM

DONE INTO ENGLISH VERSE BY

EDWIN KENDALL CUTTER

WASHINGTON
Privately Printed
MMD.

LIBRARY
JUL 0 8 2003
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

PERHAPS, my Critic says:

"It is as though the Symphony finished, He sits, alone, playing his Flageolet!" Nay, for t' other Day, through Rome, passing Milord's Kitchen, a Wench sang a simple Lovesong, all in some Five Notes, for her Voice's Lute had no More, and, methought She eased the Day for me, far above the Gilded Opera. I have small Lute enough, God knows, and Cracked and Borrowed into the Bargain; but faith, 't is New to Some and Strange, and They be Passing, Heartsick, and may Hear.

QUATRAINS FROM OMAR

I.

Out of this Charnal House of Night and Day,
Who is it holds the Secret of the Way?
And am I with the everchanging Sea
Alike impotent under His dull Sway!

II.

This World no longer stays than You or Me.
Think only on its Maker, for 't was He
Set loose thy Soul, this Maze of Life to spell.
He knows what went before and what will be.

III.

And if He does not know, what will We gain
If We go searching to add Pain to Pain?
He has lived longer, sure, than Me or you;
Set on Your puny Task, for His is vain!

IV.

Of all the Throng that broke the Clay apart,
Who hath fulfilled the Longing of his Heart,
Who is not weary 'ere his Sleep begins? —
O that We never had to make the Start!

V.

All that We know of Good dwells up on high,
Behind the violet Curtain of the Sky.

And if We tore the Curtain, once, and saw,
Would the grim Executioner bid us die?

VI.

In Olden Times the Gods were seen of Men,
A Handful dared to lift the Curtain then.
Frantic they came, no more to know themselves;
Their Eyes had seen but Madness choked their Ken.

VII.

If Mortals out of Loam and Rot He made,
Where should the Burden of our Sin be Laid?
Surely, He did not hope with such poor Stuff
The Roles of Priest and Angel could be played!

VIII.

O Maiden's Voices I have loved so long,
O Flower of Youssúf that wert all my Song!
I pray, perchance, You, coupled with the Vine,
May plead my Pardon to the Saints I wrong.

IX.

Come, come, my Love; for why should We repine,
While there is Aught so precious left as Wine?
Life is no Desert if I hear your Song,
And Poetry shine from out those Eyes of Thine.

X.

Deep have I drunk with every vagrant Maid,
Chose Wine the other Mistress of my Shade.
Some day My Lips forever must go dry.
Ah, curse the Day my Cup aside be laid.

XI.

If Ramazan were here, and my Disgrace,
The seeming Wise would not fling in my Face,—
I think I could be happy for a while,
And live on Crusts and Ashes for a Space.

XII.

Come with Me while the Lotus is in bloom
And cease to think that You need fill a Tomb.
My Lips, O King, and Body do but Taste,
And I will rob the Future of Its Gloom.

XIII.

I shall want Sleep, deep Sleep, upon my Head,
And Aeons upon Aeons to be dead,
So, when I wake, I shall not, yawning, say:
"Why could not you have let Me sleep, instead?"

XIV.

For surely Paradise must needs be nice,
If It a Man from out his Dreams entice.
Give Me my Sleep and Kisses before Bed,—
And red Wine, too, and They must call Me twice!

XV.

"O Kadi san, what were the best to do?"
And Kadi answered, "Sleep a white night through,
O Unjust Ruler of a Thousand Men,
For 'ere the Day come, all is come for You."

XVI.

"For if You cheat Oblivion of its Dread,
You need not even know that You are dead,
And rule alway, although your Rule is done;
Being a King of Dreams, your Kingdom fled."

XVII.

For Who, below, can deem a Godhead just
That steals a Boon from my ignoble Dust;
So when the Maidens call me, soft, "Khayyám!"
I lie a fathom out of sight to rust.

XVIII.

Oft in the Winter I forswore the Rose,
For Wine is better when the North Wind blows;
But now that Roses and the Spring appear,
Perchance, my Wine tastes better for 't—who knows?

XIX.

And if You chance to find upon some Breast
A Rose of Life far brighter than the rest,—
Snatch quick the Rose and tear its Petals down,
Methinks, in this World, You, at least, are blessed!

XX.

Only a Breath divides the Day and Night,
Only a Hope spans what be Wrong or Right:
Khayyám and God, two different things, You say,—
Make God of Clay and give Khayyám the Might.

XXI.

O, sad to think, that when his Day does close
Man hath not half the Grandeur of the Rose
Which dies with Twilight or the pale Moon's Kiss,
Nor hopes for Life the Gardener never sows.

XXII.

When all this Shadow-Pantomime is done,
And Man were better with his Race unrun,
How will He greet the Author of the Piece
Who made him play such Tragedy for Fun?

TAMAN SHUD.